



Senators say overdue money could help pay spill costs

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WASHINGTON -- New Jersey's Democratic U.S. senators called on President Bush to pay an overdue bill to an environmental commission that has been coordinating the cleanup of a massive oil spill in the Delaware River.

The federal government owes the Delaware River Basin Commission nearly \$6 million, the lawmakers said Tuesday.

The commission manages river-related issues for New Jersey, Pennsylvania, New York and Delaware, as well as the federal government.

Without the money, the commission has been hampered in its effort to respond to the oil spill, U.S. Sen. Jon Corzine said.

"The recent oil spill shows how important it is that we have the resources in place to protect and promote the Delaware River as a vital resource for the region and the federal government needs to pony up its share," Corzine said.

As much as 473,500 gallons of thick oil spilled into the Delaware from a ship being maneuvered into a berth at a Paulsboro refinery last month. One week later, officials said it had spread 70 miles, killing perhaps hundreds of waterfowl, threatening two nesting pairs of bald eagles, limiting ship traffic and forcing the closure of two nuclear power plants in Salem County that are cooled by water from the river.

Tsakos Group, the firm that operates the tanker Athos I, has said it is taking responsibility for the damages.

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